

THE VISITANT.

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On arriving at the close of another year, it is well to take a retrospect of the past,—to discover what good may have been effected, and what cause we may have for satisfaction or regret, as we are pursuing the journey of life.

In recapitulating the principal events of the past year in the department of Sunday Schools, we shall, no doubt, find occasion for gratitude to the Father of mercies, for the unprecedented prosperity which he has given to the cause.

The first anniversary of the American Sunday School Union, an institution, which, although now but in its infancy, bids fair, at no distant period, to become the beauty of our American Zion,—will distinguish the past year in the annals of our Sunday School history. Who but must involuntarily bless the founder of Sunday Schools, as well as the Giver of every good and perfect gift, when in the report which was presented on that occasion, he finds stated the astonishing fact, that nearly ONE THOUSAND children and youth belonging to the institution, had been made hopeful subjects of divine grace during the year—and that, on a moderate estimate, there are, in the United States, no less than one hundred and twenty-seven thousand children and youth, enjoying the benefits of this institution!

The "Land of Sunday Schools," reports an increase of numbers, during the past year, of nearly twenty-six thousand, making in Great Britain and Ireland alone, no less than eight hun-

dred and thirty-eight thousand Sunday Scholars!

But to come nearer home.—The Oneida Sunday School Union has also held its first anniversary, and merged itself into the *Western Union*. The report presented on this occasion is replete with interesting intelligence in favor of the cause. Having recently published it entire, we shall forbear remarking particularly upon its contents. The organization of the *Western Sunday School Union*, is hailed by the friends of the cause as an event highly auspicious to the general interests of the institution in this section of our country.

But the subject on which we have more special occasion for gratitude, is the apparent and great increase of interest and zeal, which has distinguished the friends of Sunday Schools throughout the Western part of the State. We are inclined to call it, a *General Revival of Sunday Schools*. The institution is becoming popular; its friends numerous and active; clergymen are giving it their decided support; and we trust that good has been effected, during the year, for which future generations will have reason to bless the memory of the present.

We might here cite many instances of *Revivals* in Sabbath Schools; but as our information is not sufficiently accurate, we shall reserve this subject for a future number. Suffice it to say, for the present, that divine refreshings are, at this moment, experienced by several schools in our im-

diate vicinity. In the school at Western, which was established, principally by the efforts of an individual, last summer, and in which, as was stated in the last report of the Oneida Union, out of ten teachers, only *one* was a professor of religion, a revival of no ordinary character, has recently commenced, and is now in existence. *All the teachers and many of the scholars*, have become apparent subjects of divine grace. Several interesting particulars have been communicated to us of this revival, which we deem inexpedient at present to publish.

At Vernon Centre, a revival has existed for some months. Three months ago, out of eighteen teachers (the whole number) in their Sabbath School, only two were professors of religion; now, out of *twenty-six*, but *two* remain without hope. Conversions among the children are also numerous.

Hampton, continues to enjoy the Divine blessing. A revival has recently commenced in their Sunday School, and about fifteen of the children are already its hopeful subjects. It is now spreading through the society. This revival is said to have been begun, so far as means were concerned, by the Superintendent's enforcing upon the teachers the truth, that *it was even possible for children to become Christians*.

On the whole, it appears that we have abundant cause for gratitude to God, for the success and the blessings which have attended us: No cause, however, for satisfaction with ourselves. Humility still becomes us; and only in the exercise of this Christian virtue, may we hope for a continuance of the Divine favor.

We have received an interesting report from the Sunday School in Adams, Jefferson county, from which we make the following extracts:—"The plan which we have pursued during the past season, namely, the establishing of a

library for the benefit of the school,—the keeping of class papers, something upon the Lancasterian plan, so that the pupils are rewarded according to merit, as it respects attendance, conduct, and manner of reciting, rather than according to the length of their lessons, has answered our highest expectations. Number of scholars, 76,—verses recited, 5,732. It has been the object of the teachers, instead of obtaining from their pupils long recitations, to give them an UNDERSTANDING of what they have committed. The greater part of their lessons have, in consequence, been recited *more than once* during the quarter."

The report concludes with some excellent remarks, from which we select the following:

"It is true, that the first school of children, is the lap of their mothers: there they acquire their earliest impressions which give a tone to their subsequent life; and the fear of God, and the love of Christ should be instilled. How desirable, then, that mothers should be pious; and yet young females are too often educated with a view to almost any thing else, but that which principally qualifies them for usefulness as mothers, and patterns of piety."

"Children are studiously trained up for particular stations in life, and why should they not be studiously trained up for God?"

"The Bible should be put into the hands of children at an early age, and into schools; and schools for the express purpose of diffusing instruction by means of this revelation, should, and will be patronized by all wholesome citizens, as well as by Christians."

"Let Sabbath schools flourish, therefore, and prove to the world, as it is in a measure already done, that of all studies, that of the Bible is the most important—followed by the greatest amount of happiness in this life—and the best preparation for the life to come. Let

them flourish, and we may hope to see the church of Christ, and the world, assuming something of that glory and purity, which have departed since the memorable days of our fathers."

COLLOQUY.

FOR THE VISITANT.

J. Good morning, C * * * : where are you going this morning?

C. To the Sabbath School.

J. I will accompany you.

C. I shall be happy, Brother, of your company. A good Providence has thrown us together this morning; I was this moment desiring to see you. I have something to say to you on a subject which has for a long time occupied my attention. You and I have been employed as Teachers in a Sabbath School for several years—

J. And a good employment it is too.

C. True, the employment is good, nor can I conceive of a better: but where is the fruit of our labor, during the whole time we have been instructing children in divine truth? Has one instance of conversion, or even seriousness, occurred in either of our classes?

J. I do not recollect of one.

C. Nor do I: and this is the subject which, as I have already observed, has for a long time occupied my mind. Why do we not see some beneficial effects of our labors? Our scholars remain as insensible to the divine and heavenly truths which we have been teaching them, as the seats upon which they sit, or the walls which encircle them. It seems that the hearts of my scholars are growing harder. When I first commenced teaching them, I could easily affect them to tears. Now, when I talk to them in the most affecting manner, and tell them of the passion of our Savior, of his birth in the manger, of the agony of his soul in the garden of Gethsemane, of the inhuman treatment

he received at Pilot's tribunal, of the crown of thorns that perforated his holy head, of his journey up the hill of Calvary, of the nails which pierced his hands and feet, and of his expiring on the cross under the weight of his Father's wrath, it does not move them.

J. This is truly a melancholy state of things. There must be a fault somewhere, because, God being judge, religious instruction, properly communicated, must improve the recipient, unless he be given over to hardness of heart and blindness of mind.

C. You do not suppose any of our scholars are given over to hardness of heart and blindness of mind, do you?

J. No; for their characters have not as yet been sullied with crime: the seeds of sin are only beginning to germinate.

C. Well, then, brother, where is the fault? It cannot be on the part of God, and you have admitted that it is not in the scholar.

J. It must consequently be in us.

C. Does it not then, stand us in hand to look about, and see in what we have erred, and to rectify the error without delay; because an error in this great work in which we are engaged, is fatal: the consequences incident to it are incalculable, unless the loss of an immortal soul can be calculated.

J. What a tremendous thought, that the souls of our scholars may possibly go down to everlasting perdition, in consequence of our not discharging our duty towards them. I tremble lest this may be the case. O how fondly would I prevent it, did I know what more to do than I have already done. I have not failed to exhort my class, Sabbath after Sabbath, to lay the truths to heart which they were committing; and could the walls of my closet speak, they would testify to the tears which have bedewed my cheek, when I have been pouring out my soul to God in fervent prayer for the conversion of their souls.

C. I think I can suggest one thing we may do in addition to what we have already done; and should we do it faithfully, I do confidently believe we should soon hear some if not all of our little ones, singing the song of redeeming love.

J. I entreat you to tell me immediately, that I may hasten to my class, and make an additional effort to do them good.

C. It is *Discipline*. We have not heretofore disciplined our classes properly. They not unfrequently come into the school playing, and continuing to play while there, and go away playing, and play all the way home: now, so long as this state of things remains, we may exhort them, and pray for them, till we grow grey in the service, and it will be fruitless; we may as soon expect to keep their bodies warm in winter without fire or clothes, as to impress them with the truths they are learning, while we neglect to preserve good order. With what success, think you, would a minister preach to a congregation, full of disorder in the sanctuary?—or a parent exhort his child to love and obedience, while he neglected to govern him?

J. With as much success as you and I have. hitherto taught our classes. I feel reproved by your remarks, and I am resolved hereafter to prevent all levity in my class, so that I may preserve that solemnity in it which the occasion and the sacredness of the day so imperiously demand.

COMPLETION OF THE CANAL.

It gives us much pleasure to observe, that this memorable event was celebrated in the city of New-York, by SUNDAY SCHOOL No. 23, in a manner subservient to the cause of juvenile improvement.

The following is copied from one side of a neat little card, presented to the scholars:

"HE HATH NOT SO DEALT WITH
ANY NATION."

"He maketh peace in thy borders, and filleth thee with the finest of the wheat.

"Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe in his prophets, so shall ye prosper."

E'er may our ships, with prosperous gale,

Led by the light of Bethlehem's star,
Still bear "glad tidings" as they sail,
And spread the Gospel wide and far.

CORRESPONDENCE.

Extract of a letter from a Sunday School Teacher, to the Editor, on receiving intelligence of the blessings which have recently attended the cause of Sabbath Schools in this vicinity:

"MY GOOD FRIEND:

"In the package — brought me I found one from — which really did my soul good. How is it my friend, does it not lift you up almost into the third heavens, to hear such glad tidings of Sabbath Schools?—Spread it then—let the news circulate through all the churches. Let it never more be hushed—let no one dare think, that the Sabbath School Institution is not one which God has formed and which he will own and bless. And let no teacher ever be again discouraged. What, though his dear pupils heed not his instructions? what, though his soul is vexed Sabbath after Sabbath, and indeed, year after year, with their inattention and indifference to the great truths of religion? One such instance as this, will more than make him returns for all his labors and trials. O, yes—one such instance as this is tenfold compensation for all the congregated toils and perplexities of all the Sabbath School Teachers who have lived since the days of Robert Raikes. I am not talking in hyperbo-

les—I speak the language of sober truth, whether we regard the effect which these revivals in Sabbath Schools, may have upon the future ages of the church, by training up those who shall become faithful ministers of the gospel; or follow in our fancy these young immortals, though ages after ages in eternity, & see them casting their crowns at the feet of Him, who, while they were Sabbath School Scholars, redeemed them from sin and washed them in his own blood, and who hath made them kings and priests unto God. I have thought much on Sabbath Schools since I have been here, although I have not yet learned any thing of peculiar interest in this region respecting them. My thoughts have been particularly turned to the obligations of ministers of the Gospel, to take a more lively interest in these most promising means to the church. I was much struck with reading lately of a single man, a Baptist missionary in the States of Missouri and Illinois, who, in less than two years was the instrument of forming more than 120 Schools, in which were more than 300 Teachers and more than 3000 Scholars! But what are a majority of the clergymen in the State of New-York doing for Sabbath Schools? They no doubt believe in the efficacy of these institutions, when accompanied with the Divine blessing. But may it not be said with truth of too many of them that they barely approve of Sunday Schools—an approbation which amounts to but little more than an absence of positive dislike to them? And is not this negative state of feeling proved to exist, by the habitual neglect of many ministers, to introduce this interesting subject on any occasion except when particular circumstances compel them to do so, and especially by their neglect to address, in their public prayers on the Sabbath, and, almost of course, in their more private devotions, one petition to the throne of mercy in behalf of Sabbath Schools? But I hope ministers of

the gospel are beginning to feel that one of the most important commands which Christ addresses to them is one which he gave to Peter—"Feed my lambs." As far as this subject concerns myself, I now see more of its vast magnitude and importance than I ever before did, and my views do not arise from a mere burst of feeling, excited by the recent good news I have heard, but they arise from a sober conviction founded on investigation and experience.

EXTRACT FROM A SERMON

Preached at the opening of the Sabbath School in Pittsfield, Ms. in May last.

The Sabbath School, the last summer was continued for the term of four months, and contained on an average 152 scholars. The attention of the children was principally directed to the Bible, and the whole number of verses committed to memory was 122,836. The whole number of verses in the bible is 31,176, and the whole of the New Testament is 7959. Of course it will be seen that the amount committed to memory by the whole school is nearly four times the amount of the whole Bible, and more than 15 times the amount of the New Testament. The highest number of verses committed by any one scholar was 4006. At the same rate this child would commit the whole Bible to memory in two years, and 7 months, and the whole of the New Testament in less than eight months. Three children committed to memory, 9976 verses, which are two thousand more than the whole New Testament contains, and thirteen committed 33,336, exceeding by nearly 1,200 verses the whole Bible. These children in the

mean time attended to the ordinary business appointed them, either in their schools or at home; consequently, all the attainments made at the Sabbath School are clear gain.

The difference observed in the progress of different scholars, depended perhaps, in some degree on the different natural powers of the children; but still more on the difference of age and application; and on the encouragement and aid which they received from their parents at home.

You see, parents, in this short story, what you may do for your children. We venture to say, that in four years you may induce your child, possessing an ordinary capacity, to commit to memory the whole Bible. In still less time, you might make familiar to him, all parts of it which might be thought suitable to be treasured in his memory. In the compass of nine months you might give to his memory the whole New Testament, and this too, without withdrawing his mind from any other important study or pursuit. But if this should be doubted, we fear no contradiction when we say the period of childhood is sufficiently long, with proper exertion on the part of the parents, to make a child familiar with the whole Scriptures.

O! fathers and mothers, what have we lost by living a little before the age of Sabbath Schools! I cannot but forcibly feel that I should preach with different sensations, and to a different audience, if instead of the ignorance of the word of God I every where meet with, I knew that every individual of mature age in the congregation had my whole text-book in their memory. I cannot but look upon the next generation, as much

elevated and privileged above us, from this single circumstance.—They seem to me to be a giant race, whom, although ourselves small in stature, we shall be instrumental of raising up. And the visions of my hopes present an increasing number of successive generations around the throne of God, redeemed through the influence of these means from the curse of the law. I seem to see too, thro' these humble but mighty exertions, the millenium hastened on, and becoming the very inheritance of our children. O favored generation of children! press on to seize the prize which your fathers must relinquish, but which it is now in their power, under God, to bequeath to you.

REMARKS.—On reading the above, we must acknowledge ourselves to have been struck with some degree of astonishment at the interesting facts which are presented to view. That notwithstanding the shortness of childhood, it is still sufficiently long for a child to be made familiar with the whole of the scriptures, beside directing a due share of attention to other studies & pursuits, is, indeed, a fact well calculated to interest and astonish those, to whom the institution of the Sabbath School was unknown, and consequently unenjoyed, in that interesting period of their existence.

While, however, we see much to admire in the above extract, we cannot but regret that the Sabbath School should be presented, exactly in this manner, to the public. The time has been, when the mere committing to memory of the scriptures, was esteemed as the highest object of this institution. That time however, has gone by. The Sunday School, having been long maturing its plans and advancing in improvement, now directs its aim to a higher standard; and the mere storing of the child-

ten's memory with the letter of divine truth, is looked upon as an object hardly to be named, in comparison with the more important one, of giving them an UNDERSTANDING of the will of God, and of the doctrines and requirements of morality and religion.

The experience of many schools in our vicinity, will confirm the truth of these remarks, and we have no hesitation in giving it as the decided opinion of those who are best acquainted with the nature and objects of the Sabbath School, that an ambitious excitement in the children to excel in the number or length of their lessons, is attended with effects derogatory to the highest interests of the institution.

MISCELLANY.

Extract from an address before the American Tract Society.

REV. MR. SUMMERFIELD.—Hume predicted the downfall of Christianity in the 19th century. Nay, he declared that he already saw evidences that its ruin was approaching. It was not the twilight, however, but as it were the dawning light of Christianity which he saw; for with the commencement of the nineteenth century the British and Foreign Bible Society and the Religious Tract Society of London were brought forth. Voltaire too, with impotent rage, assailed Christianity, and boasted that although it took twelve men to plant it, his single arm should root it out. In that day and country, it was customary to sneer at Christians. And among the French nobility, it was an old saying, "We'll leave the poor to the clergy." Bless God for the legacy. The poor we have always with us. Tom Paine boasted that he had cut down every tree in Paradise.

There was one tree he did not cut down, and that was the *tree of life*. Would that he had reached forth his hand and taken its fruit.

It is a very wonderful dispensation of Providence, that Voltaire's press—that very press that scattered its baneful tracts, so that, like the frogs in Egypt, they were found in their houses, their kneading troughs, and their ovens—is now actively employed, at Geneva, in printing the holy scriptures. In the very chamber, too, where Hume uttered his evil prophecy, the first Committee assembled for forming the Edinburgh Bible Society. One of the converts who sent that wretch a donation in prison, as he said, to compliment him for having delivered him from his ridiculous fears of hell and fantastical hopes of heaven lately died in the most horrible agony, exclaiming, I AM LOST.

NAUTICAL SERMON.

WHEN Whitfield preached before the seamen at New-York, he gave the following bold apostrophe in his sermon:

"Well my boys, we have a clear sky, and are making fine headway over a smooth sea, before a light breeze, & we shall soon lose sight of land. But what means this sudden lowering of the heavens, and that dark cloud arising from beneath the western horizon? Don't you hear distant thunder? Don't you see those flashes of lightning? There is a storm gathering! Every man to his duty! How the waves rise and dash against the ship! the air is dark! the tempest rages! our masts are gone! the ship is on her beam-ends! What next?"

It is said that the unsuspecting tars, reminded of former perils on the deep, as if struck by the power of magic, arose with united voices and

minds, and exclaimed, "*Take to the long-boat.*"

Mr. W. seizing upon this reply, urged them to take to Jesus Christ, as the long-boat, with an ingenuity which produced the happiest effects.

SABBATH SCHOOLS IN GREECE.

At the last annual meeting of the London Sunday School Union, the following resolution was unanimously adopted:—That this society, anxious to promote Christian instruction among the rising race of Greeks, engages to devote to the formation and support of Sabbath Schools among that people, whatever contributions may be forwarded for the specific object."

THE BIBLE IN THE MEMORY.

An Irish child being commanded by the priest, a short time ago, to burn his Bible, reluctantly complied, but at the same time said, "I thank God that you can't take from me the twenty chapters that I have in my mind."

An aged Minister's Evening Hymn

A venerable Clergyman, and Doctor of Divinity, in New-Hampshire, at the age of seventy years, lodged at the house of a pious friend, where he perceived the mother teaching some short prayers and hymns to her children. "Madam," said he, "your instructions may be far more important to your children, than you are now aware; my mother taught me a little Hymn, when a child, and it is of use to me to this day. I never close my eyes to rest, without first saying,

"Now I lay me down to sleep,

"I pray the Lord my soul to keep;

"If I should die before I wake,

"I pray the Lord my soul to take."

AFFECTING INCIDENT.

At a late meeting of the Seaman's Friend Society, the Rev. Leigh Richmond is said to have related the following affecting narrative:—

"When I reflect on the seaman's character and circumstances, I cannot, without peculiar interest, recollect the time when one young man went to sea, whose feelings were ill-suited to all the contingencies of a sea-faring life. I remember that the time came, when it was said that the vessel had been wrecked, and he was dead; and no intimation had reached the ears of his affectionate parents of any change of his views as to the things of God. And I remember the time when that young man was so far restored to his family, that although they saw him not, they heard that he had been saved from the shipwreck. The young man too was blessed by God, and in the midst of the ocean, with the Bible only, which his father on parting had put into his hand. The Bible was blessed to his soul in the midst of his carnal companions with whom he was surrounded. The means of grace without any human instruction, were made effectual to his soul. And at length, in sailing from port to port, there were those who became acquainted with his interesting state, and lent him the helping hand as to the concerns of the soul. The time came when that young man, who had been a foe to religion, lifted up in the Bay of Gibraltar, at his mast head, a Bethel Flag, and summoned the sailors to prayer, and prayed with them. And when I tell you that that young man is my own son, you will see that I may well say, "God bless the Sailor's Friend."